

VZCZCXRO1689
PP RUEHQU
DE RUEHPU #0337/01 0482055
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 172055Z FEB 06
FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2407
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0975
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 0825
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC 0412
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0848

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000337

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR
S/CRS
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PKAO](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: REACTION TO PREVAL'S FIRST-ROUND VICTORY

¶1. Summary: Political and civil society leaders have largely resigned themselves to the CEP's decision to declare Rene Preval's victory with 51.15 percent of the vote in the first round of voting. Leslie Manigat declared the decision a "coup d'etat," but said that he would do nothing against the decision. Charles Henri Baker said the decision was invalid. Although they did not agree with the decision, Serge Gilles and Evans Paul both recognized Preval as the president-elect. Civil Society leaders have expressed concern over the way the CEP reached its decision and there were complaints over international pressure. CEP treasurer Francois Benoit was the only member of the CEP not to sign the resolution, citing the departure from the "letter of the law." Demonstrations in Port-au-Prince transformed into celebration upon the February 15/16 announcement, while the provinces remain calm. End summary.

Presidential Candidates Concede

¶2. Preval's first-round victory has elicited criticism but ultimate resignation from politicians and civil society leaders in Port-au-Prince. Leslie Manigat, in second place with just under 12 percent of the vote, has called the action a "coup d'etat" demanding his right to a run-off but adding that he would do nothing against the "illegal decision." He said, "The right to presidential runoffs was and is still registered in the facts as well as in the principles...we are sorry that we cannot do anything against this fait accompli."

Third place candidate Charles Henri Baker called the decision invalid and said he was shocked that the CEP did not respect the electoral decree. FUSION candidate Serge Gilles said he didn't agree with the CEP's decision, but wished the president-elect well. ALYANS candidate Evans Paul also disagreed with the CEP's decision to name Preval the winner, but acknowledged the president-elect's overwhelming popularity.

Civil Society Split

¶3. Civil Society leaders also expressed reservations but acceptance about Preval's first-round victory. Andy Apaid told a Haitian contact that, "He (Preval) was not my choice, but he was going to win." Civil Society Initiative Group leader Rosny Desroches acknowledged that Preval "has massive popular support" but said that the decision was made "without

transparency." The Lawyer's Committee for the Respect and Individual Liberty (CARLI) saluted Preval's victory. The group expressed satisfaction with the decision that respected the people's clear choice.

CEP Minus One

15. All of the members of the CEP signed the resolution affirming Preval as the victor except for CEP treasurer Francois Benoit. He was quoted in the press as saying, "Although I knew Preval had an irreversible lead, I thought that this was the time for us to adhere to the spirit and the letter of the law without any consideration for external pressure."

Situation in the Provinces

16. While massive Pro-Preval demonstrations swept across Port-au-Prince, the situation in the provinces was relatively quiet. According to provincial contacts, all was calm in Les Cayes and Cap Haitien. Pro-Preval demonstrators staged minor protests in Jeremie before the CEP declared Preval the winner. Radio Caraibes said in Jacmel L'ESPWA partisans held celebrations in the street.

17. Comment: From Sunday, February 12 until Thursday, February 16 Preval partisans staged peaceful demonstrations throughout Port-au-Prince. Immediately following the announcement of Preval's first-round victory, the demonstrations turned into celebrations. Port-au-Prince returned to normal by mid-morning on February 16. The

PORT AU PR 00000337 002 OF 002

situation in the provinces was quiet throughout the week, with reports of minor Pro-Preval demonstrations, but nothing to match the clamor of the capital.
CARNEY